Geopolitics, 18:132–156, 2013
Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
ISSN: 1465-0045 print / 1557-3028 online
DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2012.713245

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Photographing Vladimir Putin: Masculinity, Nationalism and Visuality in Russian Political Culture

ANDREW FOXALL
School of Geography, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

This article introduces the study of photographs of politicians as an object of geopolitical analysis. It does this through exploring the holiday photographs of Vladimir Putin released by the Kremlin in 2007, 2009, and 2010. Putin's biography provides a backdrop to a detailed analysis of the geopolitical representations contained in the photographs of him. In the same fashion as other images, the photographs seek to provide a contemporary view of events and, at the same time, serve as a medium through which particular political scripts are narrated. The photographs also help to reproduce (and question) hegemonic discourses about public forms of masculinity in Russia. This article is intended to contribute to the debate on how visual images can help make sense of the geopolitical world.

INTRODUCTION

> Vladimir Putin is many things: former KGB agent, confident world leader and keen judo player to name but three. His role as a saviour of experimental photography is less well known.[1]

Photography matters to Vladimir Putin – although perhaps not in the way that the epigraph suggests. This article attends to questions posed by the status of the visual and the manner in which vision narrates particular geopolitical scripts in the Russian political context and, as such, has implications for how other (geo)political visual cultures might be understood. In doing this, I am mindful of the fact, as Dodds notes, that "one should not assume that

Address correspondence to Andrew Foxall, School of Geography, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland, UK. E-mail: andrew.foxall@qub.ac.uk

certain phenomena have an important visual dimension simply because they exist".[2] Indeed, as MacDonald, Hughes and Dodds explain, contesting the authenticity of images "is now part and parcel of contemporary statecraft".[3]

Geography, Rose[4] has argued, is a visual discipline. Yet, while visuality, as Campbell[5] noted in 2007, "is a pivotal assemblage in the production of contemporary geopolitics", Campbell also lamented that "in neither Geography nor Politics/International Relations are there many studies concerned with the visual culture of contemporary geopolitics".[6] Within geopolitics, the few works that have explored visual culture have focussed on geopolitical representations contained within magazines,[7] cartoons,[8] film,[9] and digital video games.[10] Acknowledging this literature gap, MacDonald, Hughes and Dodds, in their book *Observant States: Geopolitics and Visual Culture*, attempted to refocus geopolitical attention towards visuality,[11] highlighting that

> geopolitics has to some extent become a question of how particular episodes become figures in visual culture. . . . Geopolitical truths are established, and geopolitical realities enacted, through a process of visual demonstration.[12]

This paper can, in part, be seen as contributing to this contemporary refocussing of geopolitical attention towards visual culture.

Photography is the primary technology through which the world is visually performed,[13] and what is important is that the meaning of photographic images derives not just from the form and content of particular pictures, but rather from how they circulate. As Campbell[14] writes, photographs are not isolated or discrete objects, but rather are "part of networks of materials, technologies, institutions, markets, social spaces, emotions, cultural histories and political contexts"[15] that are fixed neither in time nor space. Emphasising this contextuality, Kennedy[16] notes how a photograph "does not function, simply, as a mirror of the real or a repository of memory, but shifts meaning in different contexts and in relation to different image banks of association". Taking this observation one step further, Mitchell[17] argues that images ought to be seen not just as inert objects that convey meaning but as animated beings with desires, needs, appetites, demands, and drives of their own. Using the examples of individuals kissing crucifixes, military-political posters containing phrases such as 'Your country needs you', and children treating dolls and other toys like persons (elsewhere, images are seen as threats and are destroyed, witness the controversy surrounding the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in Denmark in 2005 and other European countries in early 2006 as well as other forms of religious iconoclasm), Mitchell argues that pictures posses 'vital signs' of "agency, motivation, autonomy, aura, fecundity, or [*sic*] other symptoms", which mean that pictures are not just "signs *for* living things but signs *as* living things".[18]

Exploring the dominant (geo)political narratives contained within photographs of Vladimir Putin will locate these conceptual issues in a specific body. As the President (2000–2008 and 2012-present) and former Prime Minister (1999–2000 and 2008–2012) of Russia, a former member of the KGB (1975–1991) and head of the FSB (1998–1999), and widely seen as the authoritarian face of Russia in the 'New Cold War',[19] Putin offers a rich case for exploring how photographs can embody (and communicate) a variety of political narratives and geopolitical scripts. Drawing on Putin's summer holiday photographs that were released by the Kremlin in 2007, 2009, and 2010 – the significance of the 'missing' year (2008) hardly needs to be stated as Russia and Georgia went to war in the Caucasus while Putin attended the Olympic Games in Beijing – the dominant contemporary visual performance of Putin more often than not reduces him, as I document below, to Russia's 'James Bond' or 'Action Man'. Such a performance, I argue, is associated with a particularly militarised and sexualised masculinity, which serves to disrupt and question discourses about public forms of masculinity and what is considered acceptable, even revered, in Russia.

A full account of the photographic representation of Vladimir Putin is obviously beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, as a means of substantiating the key points that this paper seeks to make, this paper explores a selection of Vladimir Putin's summer holiday photographs. Understood as such, I make no claim to authoritative readings of the photographs and the paper is a self-consciously and self-reflexively partial account. As it follows, this paper is divided into five sections. The first section considers visual culture in Russia. The second section contextualises Putin's political popularity and reputation as the Russian 'James Bond' in his own biography. The third section discusses the performances and practices visible in the photographs of Putin. In the fourth section I document ways in which the photographs question hegemonic discourses of masculinity in Russia. Finally, by way of conclusion, I consider how exploring political photographs, such as those of Vladimir Putin, might contribute to the debate on how visual images are put to work for the purpose of making sense of the geopolitical world.

PUTIN'S PHOTOGRAPHS IN CONTEXT

While this article is concerned with photographic representations of Vladimir Putin, it is mindful of the fact, as international relations scholars have noted,[20] that global political communication increasingly takes place in a highly mediatised arena that is replete with images,[21] particularly of the 'body'. In this respect, Putin's holiday photographs are not unusual in themselves, but rather connect across time and space with images of other political figures on holiday, such as those of former US Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin hunting in Alaska,[22] former US President George W. Bush at his Texan

ranch, and former Italian President Silvio Berlusconi at his Sardinian villa.[23] Putin is not even unusual in being photographed semi-naked while on holiday, remembering the pictures of UK Prime Minster Tony Blair taking a telephone call wearing only swimming trunks in 2002 and 2006, and a bare-chested Barack Obama (then Senator of Illinois) body surfing in Honolulu in August 2008.[24] Further still, in the Soviet and post-Soviet Russian context, Putin is following a Soviet-era tradition of exploiting the power of photography (and representation) to laud the prowess, usually imaginary, of party leaders[25]. However, while such photographs might be thought of as a kind of political ritual that continues the valorisation of the virile body that was taken to its apex by Nazi Germany, the photographs of Putin challenge and shift the dominant photographic encounter that 'the public' has with 'the politician' through the destinations in which Putin is pictured and the masculine activities that he is photographed undertaking. Another reason why the photographs of Putin are unusual is that almost all other photographs of semi-naked politicians are taken by members of the public or press and are not officially released by authorities.[26] Putin's, by contrast, were released by the Kremlin with official news releases and appeared on the Kremlin website, and thus were located within a discourse of state power. Insofar as Putin was (presumably) involved in the selection of which of his holiday photographs were made public and which were not, he emerges from a process of what Jacques Lacan[27] called the 'Gaze' – a condition where the "mature autonomous subject observes 'the observation of himself' in a mirror", the psychological effect of which "is that the subject's autonomy is brought into question by the projection of his 'identity' on to an exterior object".[28] This makes Putin a particularly interesting focus of analysis.

While it is not possible to discount the specific contexts through which photographs come into being, it is important to note the central role played by photographs, as part of the wider visual culture, in shaping public opinion. In Russia, contemporary culture is "suspended between the historical narratives of the emergence of the new nation from the ruins of the USSR and the Soviet cultural legacy, whose models [revolutionary or Stalinist] are no longer functional".[29] Müller,[30] in his work *Making Great Power Identities in Russia*, alludes to the socio-political utility of visual culture in this context when he suggests that the repetition of photographs and other images that glorify Russia constitute a 'banal patriotic politics', in the best sense of Billig's[31] 'banal nationalism'. "Combining the official and the everyday, combining grand gestures and banal elements makes high politics . . . seem banal; bereft of their mystic aura they become a natural part of everyday life".[32] While Müller's observation relates to the localised production of elite identities at Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), it is clear that it applies to wider spatial scales. Together with the Russian tricolour, images of Vladimir Putin are omnipresent in Russia (and were so

even while he was Prime Minister between 2008 and 2012). In his biography of Joseph Stalin, the Russian historian Edvard Radzinsky explained the importance of political portraiture, as part of the wider 'cult of personality', in the Soviet context when he noted that

> every day the largest country in the world woke up with his [Stalin's] name on its lips. All day long that name rang out in the voices of actors, resounded in song, stared out from the pages of every newspaper. That name was conferred, as the highest of honors, on factories, collective farms, streets, and towns. During the most terrible of all wars, soldiers went to their deaths intoning his name. . . . During the political trials organized by him, his victims glorified his name as they died. Even in the camps, his portrait looked down on millions of people who, corralled behind barbed wire at his behest, turned rivers back in their course, raised cities beyond the Arctic Circle, and perished in their hundreds of thousands.[33]

While this article makes no claims about the existence of a Putin 'cult of personality' in Russia,[34] it is clear that the repetition of images of Putin is translated in, or productive of, Putin's domestic popularity (which is itself heavily cultivated and proceeds by the unprecedented use of national media[35]). According to public opinion surveys conducted by Levada Centre, Putin's popularity rose from 31% in August 1999 (when he was appointed Prime Minister) to 80% in November 1999 (when he launched the Second Chechen War) and since then has not fallen below 40%.[36] As Eichler[37] has written, "Within the process of Russia's post-communist transformation . . . the Russian–Chechen wars are linked to the destabilizing impacts of neoliberal restructuring on state and society and the use of identity as a means of legitimating power", over time such as identity was fused with "a notion of militarized, patriotic and strong Russian *masculinity* embodied by Putin [emphasis added]".[38] Scholars have noted that such a militarised masculinity has been mobilised for national patriotism[39] and has played a prominent role in Russian nationalism, particularly since the launch of the Second Chechen War.[40] Wood, in particular, has argued that the use of military encapsulates "a victory myth that appears to shore up Russian identity"[41] and serves to locate contemporary events within the longer narrative of Tsarist and Soviet history, particularly World War II.[42] Indeed, such is the use that Putin has made of World War II (and its leading holiday on May 9) that the remembrance has "increasingly taken on a personal quality designed to identify Putin directly with the holiday and the victory in the war"[43] and, as a result, has led to Putin being "unshakably identified with Russia's own greatness".[44] In this context, Putin has often drawn on a militarised form of nationalism to support his personal popularity. When he stood down as President in April 2008, owing to the Russian Constitution forbidding more than two consecutive terms, Putin

enjoyed an approval rating of 84%. This popularity continued while he was Prime Minister between 2008 and 2012 (Putin's approval ratings were frequently higher than those of Dmitri Medvedev, the Russian President[45]) and Putin remains the most popular politician in Russia today; when Putin was re-elected President in March 2012 his approval rating stood at 54%. Putin's popularity is not solely constrained to Russia either: he was named 'Person of the Year' by *Time Magazine* in 2007, the world's most influential person by *Vanity Fair* in 2008, and the world's second most powerful person by *Forbes* in 2011.

While Putin's popularity is hardly surprising when contextualised in the economic growth and broader social changes that have taken place in Russia since 2000, an important constitutive part of Putin's domestic popularity lies in his many public performances, almost all of which are photographed. Writing in *The Moscow Times* in August 2010, Nadi Abdullaev alluded to this when she noted how

> ever since his first flight in a Sukhoi warplane in October 1999, Vladimir Putin has dazzled the world with a machismo extravaganza and scored high popularity ratings that have become the backbone of the state that he runs.[46]

These insights link to what Dittmer and Dodds[47] noted as the interplay between "popular geopolitics and place specific emphasis on audiences and emotional investments". Some of Putin's other notable public performances, to which Russia's landscape usually provides the backdrop, include: flying a Tupolev Tu-160 (Blackjack) strategic bomber to test a new conventional cruise missile, in 2005; shooting a Siberian Tiger with a tranquiliser gun in the Ussuri reserve in the Russian Far East, in 2009; test driving a Renault Formula One car, in 2010; taking part in an archaeological excavation of an ancient Greek port on the Taman Peninsula, in 2011[48]; attempting to bend a frying pan with his bare hands during a visit to the summer camp of the pro-Kremlin youth group 'Nashi' at Lake Seliger, in 2011; and riding a three-wheeled Harley Davidson with motorcycle enthusiasts during a bike festival in the southern Russian city of Novorossiisk, in 2011. Work on masculinity contends that such activities are undeniably 'masculine', and thus the photographs of Putin help to configure and establish hegemonic discourses about public forms of masculinity in Russia.

Writing on masculinity in Russia, Ashwin[49] has argued that very little attention was paid to men during the Soviet period as '*zhenskii vopros*' (the 'woman question') was seen as being more important to undermining the pre-Revolutionary patriarchal social structure[50] in order to consolidate the power of the new communist state. According to Kukhterin,[51] this led to Soviet-era men being essentially marginalised: "The state forged an alliance

with the mother and child unit which it 'protected', leaving the individual man redundant on the edge of the family". As such, when the Soviet Union collapsed men were ill prepared to fill the void left by the 'universal and exclusive father' of the Communist Party. The little research that exists on masculinity in the first two decades of post-Soviet Russia[52] suggests that these issues still represent a formidable challenge for contemporary Russian men, and thus Russian masculinity is, in many respects, a 'blank canvas' onto which no form of masculinity has yet successfully projected itself or been projected. This has given the Russian political elite the opportunity to project its own form of public masculinity; as Evans Clements[53] writes, "Tsarist bureaucrats, Stalinist economic planners, intellectuals and social reformers from the eighteenth to the twentieth century understood that they could not change Russia unless and until they changed Russian men. Fundamental to this task was defining what Russian men were and what they should become". The photographs of Vladimir Putin should be seen in this context, as making a highly public and visible intervention into debates about masculinity and nationalism in Russia. Putin turned 60 in October 2012 and, in a country where male life expectancy is 63 years,[54] he stands out as an example of someone who has looked after himself, and thus, as might be expected, his form of masculinity is admired.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: RUSSIA'S 'JAMES BOND'[55]

Vladimir Putin was born in Leningrad on 7 October 1952. While at the International Law branch of the Leningrad State University he became a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), remaining a member until the party was dissolved in December 1991. Upon graduation, Putin joined the KGB and worked in the Second Department (counter-intelligence) and the First Department (monitoring foreigners and consular officials in Leningrad). According to Felshtinsky and Pribylovksy,[56] he also worked in the Fifth Directorate (combating political dissents). Putin later transferred to the foreign intelligence First Chief Directorate of the KGB, and between 1985 and 1990 was stationed in Dresden, East Germany. Following the collapse of the East German regime, Putin was recalled to the USSR and returned to Leningrad, where he assumed a position with the International Affairs department of Leningrad State University. After working under Anatoly Sobchak, Mayor of Leningrad (later St. Petersburg) between 1991 and 1996, Putin moved to Moscow. He first worked as Deputy Chief of President Staff and then First Deputy Chief of President Staff before being appointed, in July 1998, head of the FSB, a position he occupied until 9 August 1999 when he became one of three First Deputy Prime Ministers. A day later, on 10 August 1999, Putin was appointed acting Prime Minister

by President Boris Yeltsin becoming, after his appointment was approved by the State Duma on 16 August, Russia's fifth Prime Minister in fewer than eighteen months. On 31 December 1999 Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned the Presidency, and Putin assumed the role of acting President.

Putin's "meteoric"[57] rise to power from "street thug"[58] to President amounted, in the words of William Pfaff, "to a coup d'etat". "An early presidential election", Pfaff wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* in January 2000, "has suddenly been called, at a moment when war [Second Chechen War] has produced a patriotic mobilization of the public. Controlled television, radio and press are enlisted to support not only the war but also a candidate whose sole discernible entitlement to the presidency is that he is waging that war".[59] Nevertheless, Putin was elected Russian President in March 2000 with 53.4% of the vote. And, despite being widely seen as mishandling the *Kursk* submarine disaster in 2000 and an increase in Chechen terrorist attacks in Russia (most notably, perhaps, the Nord-Ost theatre siege in Moscow in 2002), Putin was re-elected President for a second term in March 2004 (with 71.9% of the vote). After serving as Prime Minister between 2008 and 2012, Putin was elected President in March 2012 (with 63.6% of the vote).

In an interview with *Vanity Fair* in October 2000, Gleb Pavlovsky, advisor to the Presidential Administration, explained that in creating the "myth of his [Putin's] all-encompassing popularity"[60] and portraying Putin as symbolic of revived Russian power, Putin had been framed by the Kremlin's image-makers as 'Max Otto von Stirlitz', the central character in Yulian Semyonov's 1968 book 'Seventeen Moments of Spring' (which was made into a popular Soviet television series in 1973):

> [a] dashing fictional KGB officer who is the hero of a popular old film, and undercover agent in the SS in Germany in World War II . . . [in which the media campaign was built around] . . . a clever series of macho photo ops in which Putin said almost nothing but proclaimed a 'dictatorship of the law', while the state-owned media mercilessly slandered his opponents.[61]

Thus, successfully matching his biography with that of an overtly masculine fictional figure, Putin was marketed by the Kremlin as a Russian action hero – "He is, if you like, our James Bond", to quote the Russian journalist Vladimir Solovyov.[62]

As a visual analogy, the idea of Vladimir Putin as 'James Bond' invites comparison. It also points to the valorisation of a particular idea of hegemonic masculinity that is linked to an assertive set of geopolitical practices. Much like Ian Fleming's fictional James Bond, Putin is a former member of the secret services, who flaunts his masculinity and excels in martial arts.[63] Such intertextuality, in a different time and place, however, might have made use of Tom Clancy's fictional character Jack Ryan, who

becomes President (of the USA) after being an intelligence officer.[64] To be sure, despite their similarities there is an important public/private divide between Putin and Bond: Bond, unlike Putin, never performed for cameras. Thus, more than 'James Bond' Putin is often portrayed as Russia's 'Action Man' (*Chelovek deistviya*). And this portrayal is not solely textual. While Putin's popularity in Russia means that his name and image are widely used in advertisement and product branding – among the Putin-branded products are *Putinka* vodka, *PuTin* brand of canned food, *Gorbusha Putina* caviar, and Denis Simachev's collection of T-shirts decorated by images of Putin[65] – over recent years a number of figurines and action figures have been released of Putin: 'Statuetki', for example, produce a figurine of Putin dressed in his Judo kit.[66] Perhaps most notable, however, was the appearance, in February 2009, of a figurine of Putin fishing bare-chested,[67] based on a photograph that was released by the Kremlin in summer 2007 (see Figure 1).

Just as scholars have argued that playing at or with war is a constituent part of warfare itself,[68] so too does playing with a figurine of Putin constitute an important geopolitical act. Significant to this is the way that the figure of Putin literally embodies any number of political projects, for example, those of Russian nationalism, internal order, and foreign policy (all formulated at the national or global scale) at the scale of the individual, or the body: what Dittmer[69] calls the "rescaling icon". Through playing with the figurine, younger owners may even fantasise about being Putin, becoming geopolitical agents through their mastery of Putin.

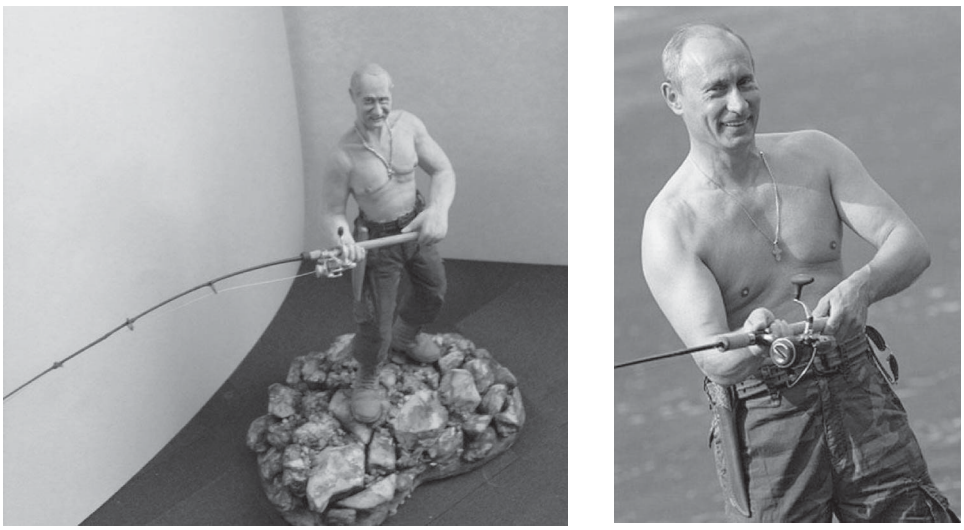

FIGURE 1 The figurine and the figure: The figurine began production in February 2009 and is based on a photograph of Putin released by the Kremlin in August 2007.

Source: <http://www.diorama.ru/gallery/sculpture/1761/photo5/>.

DECONSTRUCTING RUSSIA'S 'ACTION MAN': MASCULINITY AND PUTIN

Since Vladimir Putin is so clearly a symbol of Russia, photographs of him provide an opportunity to analyse the changing meaning of politics and symbolic shape of masculinity in Russia as the country is (re)constructed. Recalling Eichler's point that Russian national identity is both masculine and embodied by Putin, if identity is a performance[70] then 'Russia' was performed annually by Putin during his first two presidential terms (2000–2004 and 2004–2008). While photographs of Vladimir Putin were released by the Kremlin throughout his first presidential term, they came to prominence in the summer of 2007 when Putin was pictured shirtless on his summer holiday in the Republic of Tuva in Siberia. Thereafter, his annual summer holiday photographs have come to occupy central stage in domestic (and, to an extent, international) media coverage in August.

The month when most Russians traditionally head to their *dachas* on summer vacation,[71] August is traditionally thought of as being a 'slow news month' – the State Duma is not in session and there is little political activity – in Russia. Paradoxically, a number of notable events have occurred in August over the past two decades in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. It was in August 1991, for example, that the failed coup d'état took place that sought to depose Mikhail Gorbachev as President of the Soviet Union[72]; in August 2007, Russia planted a rust-proof titanium flag on the Arctic seabed; in August 2008, Russia went to war with Georgia in the Caucasus; and, more recently, in August 2010 Russia was hit by the worst draughts and wildfires (and Moscow by the warmest temperatures) in recorded history. Somewhat paradoxically, therefore, the month of August is when 'big news' happens in Russia. From their release in 2007, the photographs of Putin have widely circulated in the Russian press (the photographs were released on the Kremlin website, circulated in newspapers,[73] and shown on state TV[74]) and have helped construct a geopolitical script at a time of year otherwise bereft of news. The photographs rely on public notions of what 'real' Russians do in August.

While I go on to discuss the holiday photographs of Vladimir Putin, it is notable that the practices visible in Putin's holiday photographs bear many of the hallmarks of 'frontier masculinity', in which "remote spaces . . . are often framed as 'testing places' that invite men (often white and hailing from elsewhere) to exercise their endurance, innovation and strength".[75] To be sure, Putin is certainly not unique in this respect as leaders from other northern states travel to their northern borders, particularly those in the Arctic, as and when required.[76] Nevertheless, as McCannon[77] has shown, this notion had particular purchase in the Soviet context where the Arctic was framed as a landscape (and seascape) where individuals could demonstrate the renowned "struggle with the elements" (*bor'ba so stikhiei*), which was an

integral part of the Soviet imaginary.[78] In the process, these individuals not only created and consolidated particular gender regimes[79] but also became "celebrities of the first magnitude . . . their widespread appeal made the Arctic a central, even definitive, feature of Stalinist mass culture and propaganda".[80]

Thus, Russia's rugged landscape, far from being a passive part of the photographs, is integral to the messages that the photographs of Putin convey. As Billig[81] and Paasi[82] (and others writing on territory and the construction of national identities[83]) might suggest, the photographs of Vladimir Putin establish emotional investment in a stereotypical landscape of the nation, and use imagery of an iconic Russia to foster a feeling of nationalism that is, to echo the words of Eichler,[84] inexcusably masculine. Because the Far East is so iconic for the Russian imagination, the photographs of Putin have particular significance for Russians seeking to interpret world events through a geopolitical script.

Through an examination of the holiday photographs of Vladimir Putin, I contend that the images of Putin serve as a cultural product that connects the viewer, through the body of Putin, to the scale of the nation. This bridging of scale, from the individual body to the body politic, is "necessary for the construction of a territorially bounded state occupied by a cohesive nation".[85] As well as demonstrating Putin's domination of space, the photographs also illustrate his domination of technology, nature, his own emotions (he is often pictured alone), and other bodies (both male and female). Hence, photographs of Putin offer important insights to those seeking to critically comprehend the visual and political landscape of post-Soviet Russia.

2007

Putin's holiday photographs from 2007 show him entertaining fellow Russian politicians and international dignitaries, including Prince Albert II of Monaco and Russian Emergency Situations Minister (and Head of the Russian Geographical Society) Sergei Shoigu, at the fortress Por-Bazhyn on Tere-Khol Lake, in the Republic of Tuva in Siberia. It was during this holiday, between August 13 and 15, that Putin was first pictured shirtless: while fishing in the Yenisei River (August 13) and crouching next to the Khemchik River to drink some water (August 15) (see Figure 2); and while walking near the Khemchik River (August 15) (see Figure 3). Combined with his dog-tag military style neckline and what appear to be American-style military trousers and boots, the photographs of a shirtless Putin seem to relate to a specifically militarised masculinity, one that perhaps relates more to Jack Ryan than James Bond.[86] These images were prominently enshrined on the presidential website, and are available at http://archive.kremlin.ru/events/photos/2007/08/140910.shtml.

Elsewhere, Putin was pictured dressed in fatigues, fingerless gloves, a bush hat and chic sunglasses, riding horses, rafting down a river, fishing

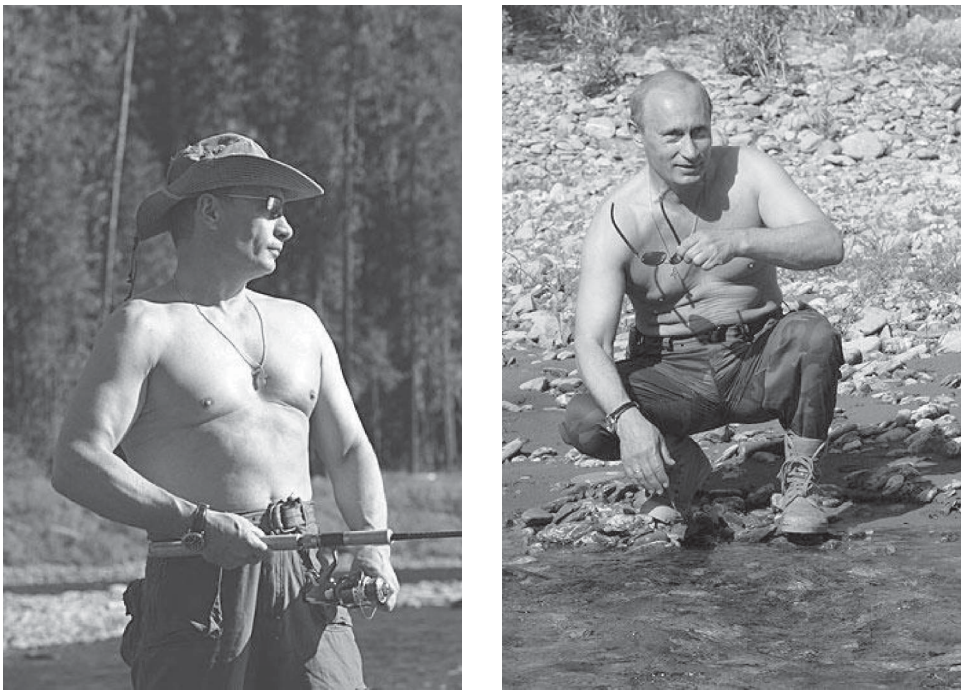

FIGURE 2 Two photographs of Putin released by the Kremlin in August 2007, Republic of Tuva.

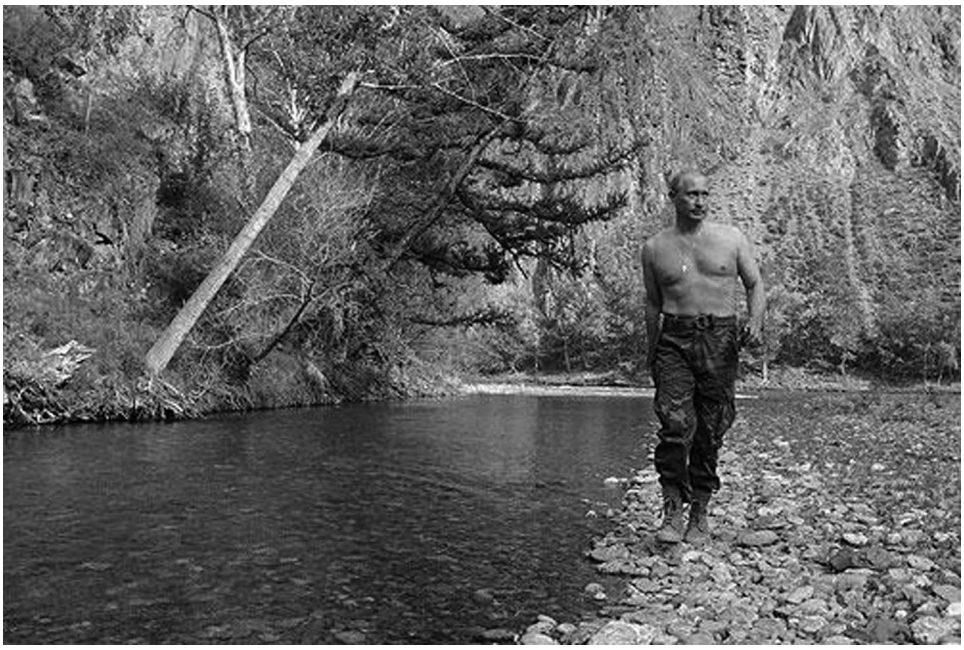

FIGURE 3 Putin photographed near the Khemchik River, 15 August 2007.

for grayling and off-roading in a sport utility vehicle. Putin was also photographed with Sergei Shoigu in a log cabin. In this latter picture, Putin is dressed in green/yellow military fatigues while Shoigu is dressed in dark blue jeans, a white shirt and blue jacket. Even in this (simple) picture, Putin, through his choice of clothing, is marked out as 'different' from mainstream Russian politicians. The message is that it is Putin who is clearly in control; holding the teapot, he pours Shoigu a cup of tea while directing Shoigu to a variety of snacks on the dining table. In this sense, Putin's body serves as an object that participates in the construction of difference between one type of person (a strong leader, giving orders, and always in charge) and another (somebody who follows orders and is willing to be pushed around). The effects of this are not insignificant, in part because they are performative; they outline a frame through which the world can be viewed, which then enables the viewer (or consumer) to adopt that frame and act based on it.

Of particular interest is a photograph of Putin walking next to the river (Figure 3). The photograph has three dimensions: that of the mountains and trees, that of the river, and, of course, that of Putin. While each of these dimensions is separate and easily distinguishable, it is Putin that dominates all the others. The mountains, while visible, are quite incomprehensible in their detail. The river, while flowing, is indistinct and merges into a sea of grey rocks at its furthest end. Thus, all of the details in the photograph become too small and too numerous to rival the authority of Putin. The position of Putin at the centre of the picture and before nature fuses the ideals and the very physicality of the Russian nation with Putin. Meanwhile Putin, facing right, looks to the future. Putin's characteristic 'macho' stance and bold expression invoke trust and confidence; his gaze embodies the future. The viewer of the photograph, thus, is invited to think of Putin as an integral part of the Russian (political) landscape, both current and in the future, and thus, in a sense, as the physical embodiment of Russia. Through the click of a camera, Putin's corporeal and symbolic bodies are combined.

The connection between Putin and the health of the country was made more tangible by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* who, on Wednesday 15 August, published a huge colour photo of the bare-chested president under the headline "Be Like Putin!" (*Stan' takim, kak Putin!*), followed by a series of exercises which would allow the reader to build up a torso like Putin's.[87]

Amid all of the outdoor posturing, pictures also showed Putin staying on top of major events – a lesson he learned after he was criticised for failing to immediately interrupt his vacation after the Kursk submarine disaster in August 2000. Putin's Siberian holiday coincided with the bombing of a passenger train near St. Petersburg (on 14 August). In a number of pictures, Putin is shown on his mobile phone, suggesting that he is issuing orders to ministers from his vacation retreat. In one photograph, Putin is shown on his mobile phone standing in front of the President's MI-8 Helicopter. The

implication is clear; Putin is ready to cancel his holiday and travel back to Moscow in the event of national emergency.

2009

The second set of holiday photographs appeared two years after the first set, on 3 August 2009. Again, Putin took his holiday in the Republic of Tuva, and again his holiday photographs showed Putin stripped to the waist (riding a horse through rugged terrain near the town of Kyzyl) (see Figure 4). Putin also showed his gentler side as he fed the horse from his hand after the ride. Rather than a holiday, Putin's trip to Tuva was presented as a 'day off' after a busy working trip to Irkutsk, where he (amongst other things) descended 1,400 m below the surface in a submarine to explore the bottom of Lake Baikal, and attached a tracking device to a white whale named Dasha at a research centre.

Having slept in a tent on the banks of the Khemchik River, Putin is photographed standing on a rocky mountain slope; resting in the branches of a tree (like a jungle cat); swimming butterfly-stroke in a river; and walking through fields with a hat similar to that worn by Indiana Jones, the Hollywood adventurer. Putin also went white-water rafting down the region's fast-flowing rivers. In most of the photos, Putin wears military-style clothes and boots, his eyes hidden behind reflective sunglasses. In the equestrian

FIGURE 4 Putin horse riding in rugged terrain in August 2009, Republic of Tuva.

shots, he is shirtless. Much like his 2007 holiday photographs, these pictures are enshrined on Putin's personal government website, and are available at http://premier.gov.ru/eng/visits/ru/6122/events/4678/photolents.html.

One of the striking elements of the 2009 photographs is the extent to which Putin is pictured with local people. In an otherwise deserted area, Putin is pictured with a shepherd and his flock of sheep. It becomes apparent from the photographs that follow that Putin was invited back to the shepherd's home. Putin is, thereafter, pictured with the shepherd and his son on mounted horses riding to the shepherd's house. Although it is unlikely that the Tuvan shepherd would speak much Russian, Putin is show drinking, eating, and conversing with the man; suggesting that Putin can find a 'common language' with all of Russia's citizens. What is interesting, therefore, is that the shepherd does not appear to question why Putin would be in Tuva because to him it is in the background – what Billig[88] would call an "unwaved flag". Before leaving the shepherd's house, Putin is photographed presenting the shepherd with his hunter's knife as a memento of their meeting. Tuva, thus, far from being contextualised as an Orientalised centre of intrigue, as one might expect, is presented as an appealing destination: Putin seemingly knows his way around the region, and has no trouble conversing with individuals who likely do not speak Russian (or German, which Putin speaks fluently owing to his time spent in East Germany whilst in the KGB).

Two other photographs – which show Putin in the 'struggle with nature' (*bor'ba so stikhiei*) through collecting and breaking firewood and then building a fire – are noteworthy. In a vivid contrast to 'Socialist Realist' art – one of the "striking enigmas" of the 'Social Realism' movement is that art produced under this banner, Bassin wrote, "left this dramatic and eminently picturesque theme [struggle with nature] virtually untouched. With very few exceptions indeed, all representations of the interrelationship between society and nature were imbued with an explicit sense of organic harmony. . ."[89] – Putin flaunts his abilities as a frontiersman.

2010

The final set of summer holiday photographs were released on 23 and 24 August 2010. While his two previous holidays were in Tuva, in 2010 Putin visited Yakutia. And, while his holidays in Tuva presented a relatively unnuanced geopolitical script in which Putin embodied the Russian nation, Putin is cast as an 'environmentalist' in Yakutia. Putin is pictured studying the bones of mammoths at an excavation site, shooting a grey whale to collect skin samples whilst in a speedboat, and watching a brown bear eat fish in a river. These pictures are available on Putin's personal government website, at http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/11882/photolents.html (August 23) and http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/11903/photolents.html (August 24).

Unlike previous years, Putin is not pictured bare-chested or shirtless. Rather, he is shown in his familiar dark-green outdoor clothing and military fatigues. On 23 August, Putin was pictured first in the village of Tiksi and then on Samoilovsky Island. While on Samoilovksy, Putin is pictured meeting members of the Russian and German research expedition *Lena 2010* and is accompanied by Yuri Trutnev (Minister of Natural Resources and Environment) and Alexander Gukov (Director of the Ust-Lensky nature reserve). The geopolitical reordering implicit in this is significant; it punctures the Russian-centric nature of Putin's photographs, showing that even a country like Russia undertakes international collaboration. After looking over the research results of *Lena 2010*, Putin is pictured holding a meeting with scientists. In one particular picture, Putin is shown sitting next to two young female scientists at a table covered with food and drink (see Figure 5).

In this photograph Putin is sitting at the table, captured in an everyday task (that of eating and drinking) in a pose at once private and even intimate. Putin is not commanding the two young women; he does not even seem to be aware that he is being photographed. Indeed his eyes are busy and his action is quite normal. Although it is unlikely that Putin set the table himself, that he is pictured at a table covered with drinks and foodstuffs conveys a care for and proficiency in small tasks. A map of Russia provides the backdrop for the meeting. This is key, because Putin has long emphasised

FIGURE 5 Putin meeting with two female members of the Russian and German expedition 'Lena 2010', August 2010.

the importance of geography to Russia – Russia's geography is often seen as guaranteeing its place as a global power – and he became Head of the Board of Trustees of the Russian Geographical Society (RGS) on 18 November 2009. Indeed, in his inaugural address to the RGS, Putin emphasised:

> When we speak about Russia, we often automatically say 'Great Russia' . . . I repeat, the scale, the territory, the population, and natural resources are inalienable components of a great power [*derzhava*].[90]

The seeming privacy and intimacy of the photograph is quite deliberate. Putin is well aware that being a warm and compassionate 'father' figure is just as vital to his popularity (and power) as being a strong leader.

MILITARISED AND SEXUALISED MASCULINITIES

In addition to reading Putin's body as 'political', Putin's body is also read as 'sexualised' by particular audiences. After publishing Putin's 2007 holiday photographs online, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reported that women who viewed its website posted comments on Putin's "vigorous torso" and "were screaming with delight and showering [Putin] with compliments".[91] Indeed, when one Moscow-based radio talk show host, Yevgeniya Albats, suggested that the semi-naked photographs were unbecoming of a prominent Russian politician, female listeners bombarded her with e-mails and other messages expressing admiration for Putin's physique. As such, images of topless bodies lend themselves to an affective analysis of Mitchell's point that images are "animated beings with desires, needs, appetites, demands, and drives of their own" and how these intersect with the libido.

In 2002, a widely hyped rock video appeared in Russia entitled "A Man like Putin" (*Takogo kak Putin*) in which 'Singing Together', an all-girl pop group, compared Putin favourably with their boyfriends, singing:

> I want a man like Putin, who's full of strength,
> I want a man like Putin, who doesn't drink,
> I want a man like Putin, who won't make me sad,
> I want a man like Putin, who won't run away

With Putin's seal of approval, the song was played heavily on Russia's state-run radio stations, featuring on Russia's MTV channel. Within weeks, the song topped the music charts in Russia. Putin used the song heavily during his presidency, especially during his 2004 re-election campaign, and the song is still sung at his political rallies.

If the 2002 music video continued the manufacture of presidential charisma that had begun with the casting of Putin as 'Stirlitz' in 1999, then it

also marked the beginning of the sycophantic sexualisation of Putin's masculinity, which continued when he became Prime Minister in 2008 and was prominent in his 2012 presidential election campaign. In October 2010, for example, 12 female students from Moscow State University posed for an erotic calendar to mark Putin's 58th birthday.[92] Each model is semi-naked and is pictured with a speech bubble. Captions include, "How about a third time?" (referring to Putin's potential return to the presidency), "You put out the fires, but I'm still burning" (referring to the fires throughout Russia that summer), and, simply, "We love you".[93] 50,000 copies of the calendar were printed, and were sold in supermarkets throughout Moscow.

More recently, in July 2011 a female group calling itself 'Putin's Army' (*Armiya Putina*) was formed to unite "beautiful and self-confident young girls" who believed that Putin is "a trustworthy and honest politician" and thus deserving of returning to the Russian presidency (in 2012, which he did).[94] Clearly approving of Putin's masculinity, 'Putin's Army' used erotic, rather than political, means[95] to achieve their goal. In an address published on their webpage, the activists encouraged females to join their group through taking part in a competition called "I'll tear anyone apart for Putin" by recording a video showing how they are 'tearing anything apart'. The sample video (at the time of writing, the video had over 280,000 views on YouTube) portrayed an attractive twenty-something female wearing high heels, a short skirt, and skimpy top walking through central Moscow and talking to two female friends on a riverbank while they use smartphones, tablets and other symbols of ostentatious wealth. To thank Putin for her expensive lifestyle, Private Diana (as the girl is called in the video) writes a pledge to "rip up it for Putin" [*Porvu za Putina*][96] in lipstick on a tank top. The video ends with the girl ripping her tank top and bra off. The girl in the video remarks:

> I'm crazy about the man who changed the destiny of our country. . . . He's a great politician, and an amazing man. He's Vladimir Putin. . . . He is adored by millions, but there are some people who throw mud at him – maybe because they are afraid, maybe because they are weak and because they will never take his place.

The emergence of the female Putin's Army suggests both sexual and military dimensions to masculinity in Putin's Russia, which work on nationalism contends arises as a result of the intimate connection between nationhood and manhood.[97] However, such militarism is only partially accessible to females. For example, although women have the legal right to serve in the Russian Armed Forces (in 2002, around 10% of Russia's armed forces were female), attitudes toward women in the military conform to particular gender types and are exemplified by activities such as 'Miss Russian Army'.[98]

At the same time as 'demanding' a heterosexual following, Putin's photographs also 'demand' a homosexual following. Revealing of an alternative masculinity, Russian gay chat rooms and blogs seized on the 2007 photographs to suggest that Putin, by stripping to his waist, was somehow pleading for more tolerance for homosexuality in Russia, where gays and lesbians, for the most part, remain closeted. Mobilising this homosexual narrative, one satirical photo circulating on the Internet compared Putin's time with Prince Albert of Monaco to the Hollywood movie 'Brokeback Mountain', a love story about two homosexual cowboys.[99] While homosexual acts between consenting males were legalised on 27 May 1993, homosexuality was only formally removed from the list of Russian mental disorders in 1999. And Putin has been far from ambivalent in making his views on homosexuality clear; indeed, his views conform to a 'heteronormative' rejection of homosexuals. Commenting in 2007 on the decision of Yuri Luzhkov, then Mayor of Moscow, to ban the 'Moscow Pride' gay-rights parade in 2007,[100] Putin stated:

> My relations to gay parades and sexual minorities in general is simple – it is connected with my official duties and the fact that one of the country's main problems is demographic. . . . But I respect and will continue to respect personal freedom in all its forms, in all its manifestations.

Rector[101] has noted that such a connection between homosexuality and demography was an integral part of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In a speech in 1928, the Nazi party used the idea of survival and procreation to denounce homosexuals: "It is not necessary that you and I live, but it is necessary that the German people live . . . therefore we reject you, as we reject anything which hurts our own people".[102] Thus, given the highly problematic nature of homosexuality in Russia together with the rise of fascism and increasing proliferation of neo-Nazi groups,[103] it is notable that Putin's photographs have a homoerotic following. Further, from the late 1920s onwards, Nazi propagandists made a connection between the sensitivity of the weakened state Germany was left in after World War I and the need to sexually reproduce to ensure that Germany "once again become [*sic*] strong!".[104] Although it is not to claim that he is following Nazi doctrine, it is interesting that Putin has made similar claims that for Russia to reclaim its 'great power' (*derzhava*) status, which it 'lost' in the post-Soviet transition of the 1990s, is dependent on it having a strong population. While the feminist scholar Chloe Enloe noted that "when a nationalist movement becomes militarized male privilege in the community usually becomes more entrenched",[105] evidence from Putin's Russia suggests that only particular males (those who conform to the nationalist project) are 'privileged'.

As the discussion above illustrates, the hegemonic reading of Putin's body as 'political' has been challenged by a militarised and sexualised narrative, in which Putin's body 'demands' a hetero- and homosexual following. In this sense, the more-than-symbolic nature of the photographs of Putin help maintain the hegemony of the male leader through creating libidinal attachment in addition to symbolic structures and, at the same time, contribute to the development of a nationalism associated with an assertive set of militarised geopolitical practises.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that photographs of Putin inform: (1) the meaning of Russia and how 'Russia' is rescaled from the international to the body, (2) the importance of landscape in forming territorial bonds between citizens, (3) the construction of a dominant Russian identity and political narrative that is highly masculinised and is at once both individual (Putin) and universal (Putin 'as' Russia), and (4) the emergence of militarised and sexualised narratives of masculinity, which is linked to nationalism. Importantly, the photographs of Putin do not simply reflect politics; they are also political, both manifesting and enabling power relations that are not so much about Russia's role and place in the world than about linking Putin's virility to a masculinised and militarised image of Russia. Of course, as Campbell[106] argues, Putin's photographs are not isolated, but rather gain currency through how they circulate and connect with other (wider) performances of masculinity, including Putin's decision to launch the Second Chechen War, his use of street language and swear words (which simultaneously excludes women), his threats of violence toward those who undermine him (particularly members of the press), and his 'de-masculinisation' of rival politicians and oligarchs.

As an integral part of popular culture in Russia, Putin's holiday photographs raise broader questions about what visuality means and how visual images are put to work for the purpose of making sense of the geopolitical world. This is an important geopolitical project, as the work of MacDonald, Hughes, and Dodds[107] makes clear. Although this paper has concentrated its attention on photographs of Putin and has critically explored visual culture in Russia, it needs to be emphasised that much of what I have discussed is not exclusively or uniquely 'Russian', and thus this paper has implications for how visual culture(s) elsewhere might be understood. Research that has been carried out on masculinity and visual culture, for example, has emphasised the "often ambivalent configurations of masculinity in modern culture, configurations which increasingly defy easy categorisation".[108] In contrast to such ambiguity, however, photographs of politicians often conform to particular gender configurations and, in turn, these are associated with particular

sets of geopolitical practices (which are themselves often photographed, or visually represented). At the same time, political photographs can be used to subvert those geopolitical practices through the use of visual registers to belittle and ridicule power (such as the image of Putin and Prince Albert of Monaco in 'Brokeback Mountain'). While such visual degradation may strike some as limited, this constitutes an important political act in countries where genuine political opposition is oppressed and sidelined. Thus, in the same fashion as other visual registers, political photographs can play an important part in making sense of the geopolitical world because of the manner in which they construct, consolidate, and condition particular (geo)political scripts, and the means by which they can be used "to disrupt, to challenge and to deride" these same scripts. As such, photographs of politicians must surely be a part of the contemporary re-focussing of geopolitics toward visual culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Jason Dittmer, the editors of *Geopolitics* and three anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments on early drafts of this paper and for perceptive questions that pushed the argument of the paper. I would also like to thank John Agnew for his comments on the final draft and Michelle Zito for her patience during the proofing stage. The usual disclaimers apply.

NOTES

1.A. Blenford, 'Lomos: New Take on an Old Classic', *BBC News*, 22 Sep. 2007. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7007160.stm>.

2.K. Dodds, 'Steve Bell's Eye: Cartoons, Popular Geopolitics and the War on Terror', *Security Dialogue* 38 (2007) p. 157.

3.F. MacDonald, R. Hughes, and K. Dodds, *Observant States: Geopolitics and Visual Culture* (London: IB Tauris 2010) p. 2.

4.G. Rose, 'On the Need to Ask How, Exactly, Is Geography 'Visual'?', *Antipode* 35 (2003) pp. 212–221.

5.D. Campbell, 'Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict', *Political Geography* 26/4 (2007) p. 357.

6.Ibid., p. 358.

7.For example, J. Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2000).

8.For example, J. Dittmer, 'America Is Safe While its Boys and Girls Believe in its Creeds! Captain America and American Identity Prior to World War 2', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25/3 (2007) pp. 401–423;); Dodds, *Observant States* (note 2) pp. 157–177.

9.For example, C. Dahlman, 'Masculinity in Conflict: Geopolitics and Performativity in The Crying Game', in T. Cresswell and D. Dixon (eds.), *Engaging Film* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield 2000) pp. 1–10; S. Carter and D. P. McCormack, 'Film, Geopolitics and the Affective Logics of Intervention', *Political Geography* 25/2 (2006) pp. 228–245; S. Dalby, 'Warrior Geopolitics: Gladiator, Black Hawk Down and The Kingdom of Heaven', *Political Geography* 27/4 (2008) pp. 439–455; K. Dodds, "Have

You Seen Any Good Films Lately?' Geopolitics, International Relations and Film', *Geography Compass* 2/2 (2008) pp. 476–494; K. Dodds, 'Jason Bourne: Gender, Geopolitics, and Contemporary Representations of National Security', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 38/1 (2010) pp. 21–33; M. Shapiro, *Cinematic geopolitics* (London: Routledge 2008).

10. For example, M. Power, 'Digitized Virtuosity: Video War Games and Post-9/11 Cyber-Deterrence', *Security Dialogue* 38/2 (2007) pp. 271–288.

11. See also, Campbell, 'Geopolitics and Visuality' (note 5) pp. 357–382; F. MacDonald, 'Geopolitics and 'The Vision Thing': Regarding Britain and America's First Nuclear Missile', *Transactions* 31/1 (2006) pp. 53–71; R. Hughes, 'Through the Looking Blast: Geopolitics and Visual Culture', *Geography Compass* 1/5 (2007) pp. 976–994.

12. MacDonald, Hughes, and Dodds (note 3) pp. 2–4.

13. D. Campbell 'Photography' (2010), available at <http://www.david-campbell.org/photography/>.

14. Campbell, 'Geopolitics and Visuality' (note 5) pp. 357–382.

15. Campbell, 'Photography' (note 13).

16. L. Kennedy, 'Remembering September 11: Photography as Cultural Diplomacy', *International Affairs* 79/2 (2003) p. 325.

17. W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 2004).

18. Ibid., p. 6.

19. E. Lucas, *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West,* (London: Bloomsbury 2008). See also, A. Foxall, 'A 'New Cold War': Re-drawing the MAP/map of Europe', *Political Geography* 28/6 (2009) pp. 329–331.

20. For example, M. Williams, 'Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003) pp. 511–531.

21. Campbell, 'Geopolitics and Visuality' (note 5) p. 358.

22. See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/hunter-becomes-the-hunted-as-palin-critics-say-she-cant-shoot-2153973.html>.

23. Berlusconi is, perhaps, infamous for the 'bunga bunga' parties he hosted at the villa. See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/8400591/Silvio-Berlusconi-and-the-bunga-bunga-parties-in-pictures.html?image=21>. See also J. Agnew, 'The Big Seducer: Berlusconi's Image at Home and Abroad and the Future of Italian Politics', *California Italian Studies* 2/1 (2011), available at <www.sscnet.ucla.edu/geog/downloads/856/413.pdf>.

24. See <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/02/shirtless-politicians-pho_n_1071921.html#s273495&title=President_Obama>.

25. Leonid Brezhnev, for example, was fond of hunting bears and wild boar. However, he grew so incapable of hunting towards the end of his life that KGB officers would frequently drug and tether animals to trees so that he could shoot them. Thus, in Russia Putin's performances find historical analogues, and photographs of his performances become loaded with emotions, ideals, and world views that are perhaps lacking for non-Russians (who often ridicule the same photographs). It should be mentioned, of course, that Brezhnev is not unique in enjoying hunting. Rather, Brezhnev was, in many respects, aping European aristocracy, not least British royalty.

26. Elsewhere, politicians have actively sought to stop revealing photographs of themselves becoming public: in August 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, boarded a boat carrying members of the paparazzi after they took photographs of him wearing only his swimming trunks while on holiday in America.

27. J. Lacan, *Seminar One: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–1954* (New York: Norton 1988). See also J.-A. Miller, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company 1998).

28. F. P. Miller, F. V. Agnes, and J. McBrewster, *Gaze* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag 2010).

29. E. Dobrenko and A. Shcherbenok, 'Between History and the Past: The Soviet Legacy as a Traumatic Object of Contemporary Russian Culture', *Slavonica* 17/2 (2011) p. 77. See also for example, S. Hutchings and N. Rulyova (eds.), *Television and Culture in Putin's Russia: Remote Control* (London: Routledge 2009); V. A. Kivelson and J. Neuberger (eds.), *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture* (Yale: Yale University Press 2008); S. White (ed.), *Media, Culture and Society in Putin's Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

30. M. Müller, *Making Great Power Identities in Russia: An Ethnographic Discourse Analysis of Education at a Russian Elite University* (Zürich: LIT 2008).

31. M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage 1995).

32. Müller (note 30) p. 129.

33. E. Radzinsky, *Stalin* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1996) p. 3.

34. Putin has been keen to deny the existence of a 'cult of personality' in Russia, noting in 2010 that "a cult of personality doesn't just involve a focus on one person but also mass breaches of law, connected with repression. . . . Even in nightmares I couldn't imagine this ever happening in today's Russia because our society. . . is mature enough, I assure you, not to allow the process." See, 'Putin Says Cult of Personality Cannot Happen in Russia Again', *RIA Novosti*, 6 June 2010, available at <http://en.rian.ru/news/20100609/159362061.html>. See also J. A. Cassiday and E. D. Johnson, 'Putin, Putiniana and the Question of a Post-Soviet Cult of Personality', *Slavonic and East European Review* 88/4 (2010) pp. 681–707.

35. D. Shlapentokh, 'Russian History and the Ideology of Putin's Regime Through the Window of Contemporary Russian Movies', *Russian history* 36/2 (2009) p. 278.

36. In May 2012, Putin's approval rating increased to 55%. This followed Putin's *annus horribilis* when his approval ratings fell from 56% in 2010 to 43% in 2011, before increasing to 54% on the eve of the 4 March 2012 presidential election.

37. M. Eichler, 'Russia's Post-Communist Transformation', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8/4 (2006) p. 487.

38. Ibid., p. 498.

39. V. Sperling, 'Making the Public Patriotic: Militarism and Anti-Militarism in Russia,' in M. Laruelle (ed.), *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia* (London: Routledge 2009) pp. 218–271.

40. V. Sperling, 'The Last Refuge of a Scoundrel: Patriotism, Militarism, and the Russian National Idea', *Nations and Nationalism* 9/2 (2003) pp. 235–253.

41. E. A. Wood, 'Performing Memory: Vladimir Putin and the Celebration of WWII in Russia', *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 38 (2011) pp. 172–200.

42. T. Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007).

43. Ibid., p. 173.

44. Ibid., p. 198.

45. For example, in a November 2010 survey for the Levada Centre Putin's approval rating stood at 79% compared to Medvedev's at 75%. In November 2011 their approval ratings were 67% and 62%, respectively.

46. N. Abdullaev, 'Bears and Mamouth Bones Keep Putin on TV', *The Moscow Times*, 27 Aug. 2010.

47. J. Dittmer and K. Dodds, 'Popular Geopolitics Past and Present: Fandom, Identities and Audiences', *Geopolitics* 13/3 (2008) p. 440.

48. During this excavation Putin remarkably discovered two amphorae (urns) dating from the sixth century BC. It later emerged, in October 2011, that the 'discovery' had been staged. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/06/vladimir-putin-spokesman-urns-staged>.

49. S. Ashwin, 'Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia', in S. Ashwin (ed.), *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge 2000) pp. 1–29.

50. S. Kukhterin, 'Fathers and Patriarchs in Communist and Post-Communist Russia', in S. Ashwin (ed.), *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge 2000) pp. 71–89.

51. Ibid., p. 73.

52. B. A. Janey, N. V. Janey, N. Goncherova, and V. Savchenko, 'Masculinity Ideology in Russian Society: Factor Structure and Validity of the Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale', *The Journal of Men's Studies* 14/1 (2006) pp. 93–108.

53. B. Evans Clements, 'Introduction', in B. Evans Clements, R. Friedman, and D. Healey, *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan) p. 12.

54. See <http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/2010/demo/tab12-2010.xls>.

55. A full biographical account of Vladimir Putin is clearly beyond the scope of this paper. For Putin's own autobiography, see V. Putin, *Ot Pervogo Litsa* [In the First Person] (Moscow: Vagrius 2000).

56. Y. Felshtinsky and V. Pribylovsky, *The Age of Assassins. The Rise and Rise of Vladimir Putin* (London: Gibson Square Books 2008) p. 45.

57. S. Mulvey, 'Vladimir Putin: Spy turned Politician', *BBC News*, 1 Jan. 2000, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/415124.stm>.

58. M. Gessen, *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Penguin Books 2012).

59. W. Pfaff, 'Russia's Yeltsin-Putin Coup d'État Remains to Be Ratified', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Jan. 2000, quoted in W. N. Grigg, 'Putin's Personality Cult: The Real Vladimir Putin – Career KGB Officer and Figurehead for a Vast Criminal Collective – Is Disguised by the Kremlin Myth of his Popularity as a Pro-Western National Hero of Russia', *The New American*, 8 April 2002.

60. Kagarlitsky, 'Organised Love', *The Moscow Times*, 20 July 2001, quoted in Grigg (note 59).

61. M. Orth, 'Russia' Dark Master', *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 2000, available at <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2000/10/putin200010>, quoted in Grigg (note 59).

62. A. Harding, 'Why is Putin Popular?', *BBC News*, 8 March 2000, available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/669247.stm>.

63. Putin began training in Sambo (a martial art that originated in the Soviet Union) at the age of 14, before switching to judo, which he continues to practise today. Putin has co-authored a book on judo, published in Russian as 'Judo with Vladimir Putin' (*Dzyudo c Vladimirom Putinim*) and in English under the title 'Judo: History, Theory, Practice' (2004), and in 2008 released a DVD in Russia entitled 'Let's Learn Judo with Vladimir Putin' ('*Uchitsya dzyudo s Vladimirom Putinym*'). Putin earned Master of Sports (a Soviet and post-Soviet Russian title) in Sambo (in 1973) and Judo (in 1975). Although he is not the first world leader to practise judo, Putin is the first leader to move forward into the advanced levels (he currently holds a 6th dan). In December 2009, Putin offered to join Russia's Olympic Judo team.

64. I am grateful to Jason Dittmer for pointing this out to me.

65. See <http://www.gazeta.spb.ru/12122-0/>.

66. See <http://statuetki.ru/index.php?lan=&file=shop&cat=26&product=264>.

67. See <http://www.diorama.ru/gallery/sculpture/1761/>.

68. F. MacDonald, 'Space and the Atom: On the Popular Geopolitics of Cold War Rocketry', *Geopolitics* 13/4 (2008) pp. 611–634; J. Der Derian, 'War as Game', *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 10/1 (2003) pp. 37–48.

69. Dittmer, 'America Is Safe' (note 8).

70. Billig (note 31) pp. 49–50; J. Dittmer, 'Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture and Geopolitics', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95/3 (2005) p. 629.

71. More than fifteen Russian celebrations occur in August, from the memorial days of 'The day of home front workers' (on 1 August) and 'The day of airborne troops' (on 2 August) to the 'Harvest' festivals of Medoviy Spas (Honey Day) (on 14 August), Yalochniy Spas (Apple Day) (on 19 August) and Orekhoviy (a 'harvest' celebration which marks the 'ripening' of nuts and grains) (29 August), and the public holiday 'The day of Russian state flag' (22 August).

72. Gorbachev was simultaneously President of the Soviet Union (1 October 1988–25 December 1991) and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (11 March 1985–24 August 1991).

73. To see, for example, how RIA Novosti (the Russian International News Agency) covered the photographs, see <http://ria.ru/society/20070814/71484584.html> (2007), <http://ria.ru/society/20090803/179624379.html> (2009), and <http://ria.ru/politics/20100823/268173890.html> (2010).

74. To see how 'Vesti' (also known as 'Rossiya 24'), a national TV channel in Russia, covered the 2009 photographs, see <http://www.vesti.ru/videos?vid=237261>.

75. K. Dodds, 'Graduated and Paternal Sovereignty: Stephen Harper, Operation Nanook 10 and the Canadian Arctic', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (forthcoming) p. 16.

76. K. Dodds, 'We Are a Northern Country: Stephen Harper and the Canadian Arctic', *Polar Record* 47/243 (2011) pp. 371–382.

77. J. McCannon, 'Positive Heroes at the Pole: Celebrity Status, Socialist-Realist Ideals and the Soviet Myth of the Arctic, 1932–39', *Russian Review* 56/3 (1997) pp. 346–365.

78. See E. Dobrenko and E. Naiman (eds.), *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2003); M. Bassin, "I Object to Rain that is Cheerless': Landscape Art and the Stalinist Aesthetic Imagination', *Cultural Geographies* 7 (2000) pp. 313–336.

79. R. Connell, *Gender and Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1987).

80. McCannon (note 77) p. 347.

81. Billig (note 31).

82. A. Paasi, 'Deconstructing Regions: Notes on the Scales of Spatial Life', *Environment and Planning A* 23 (1991) pp. 239–265.

83. See, for example, G. H. Herb, 'Double Vision: Territorial Strategies in the Construction of National Identities in Germany, 1949–1979', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94 (2004) pp. 140–164.

84. Eichler (note 37) p. 487.

85. Dittmer, 'Captain America's Empire' (note 70) p. 630.

86. I am thankful to Simon Dalby for pointing this out to me.

87. See <http://www.kp.ru/daily/23954/71877>.

88. Billig (note 31) p. 40.

89. Bassin (note 78) p. 323.

90. V. V. Putin, 'Prime Minister Vladimir Putin Attended a Congress of the Russian Geographical Society', 18 Nov. 2009, available at <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/8292/>.

91. See <http://english.pravda.ru/news/russia/23-08-2007/96270-barechestedputin-0/>.

92. A day later, however, a rival calendar appeared on the internet, containing photographs of female students all wearing black and with yellow tape sealing their mouths shut. Protesting against the silencing of political dissidents, captions included: "Who killed Anna Politkovskaya?" and "When Will They Free Mikhail Khodorkovsky?" See <http://en.rian.ru/art_living/20101008/160885707.html>.

93. See <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/arts_n_ideas/article/wanted-happy-birthday/418636.html>.

94. See <http://vkontakte.ru/armiaputina>.

95. This is not unique to Russia. Witness the emergence, in 2008, of the Ukrainian political protest group 'FEMEN'. The organisation, composed primarily of female university students aged between 18 and 20, is known for organising topless protests against sex tourism, international marriage agencies, political corruption, and other national and international ills.

96. When translated, Private Diana's pledge to "rip it for Putin" is not just a call for girl's to bear their breasts. Rather, *Porvu* also contains a violent threat. In effect, Diana is promising to both rip her shirt open and also beat you up. See M. A. Berdy, 'The Word's Worth: Russian Girls Ready to Rip for Putin', *The Saint Petersburg Times* 1667/29 (27 July 2011).

97. J. Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21/2 (1998) pp. 242–269.

98. J. G. Mathers, 'Women in the Russian Armed Forces: A Marriage of Convenience?', *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military* (Fall-Winter, 2000).

99. See 'Putin zakrepil status gei-ikoni [Putin has consolidated his status as a gay icon]', *Vedmosti*, 5 Aug. 2009, available at <http://www.vedomosti.ru/newsline/news/2009/08/05/813685>.

100. In May 2005, the LGBT Human Rights Projects 'Gayrussia.ru' was founded and launched the 'Moscow Pride' march. However, the 'Moscow Pride' has been banned each year since 2006, and Moscow Pride regularly degenerates into violent clashes with anti-gay protestors.

101. F. Rector, *Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals* (New York: Stein and Day 1981).

102. Ibid., p. 105.

103. M. Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation: Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009).

104. Ibid., p. 105.

105. C. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1990) p. 56.

106. Campbell, 'Photography' (note 13).

107. MacDonald, Hughes, and Dodds (note 3).

108. R. West, 'Men, the Market and Models of Masculinity in Contemporary Culture: Introduction', in R. West and F. Lay (eds.), *Subverting Masculinity: Hegemonic and Alternative Versions of Masculinity in Contemporary Culture* (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi 2000) pp. 7–28.

Copyright of Geopolitics is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.